

never such a blizzard before by onakissgodknows

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Summary:

Christmas Eve, 1958.

“Miz Marsh,” he says in his best proper British impression, “a gentleman could never allow a lady to walk home alone in such frightful weather as this.”

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Author's Note:

This is more specific to the IT book!verse rather than the film!verse (though some characterization definitely comes from the movies) so both of Beverly's parents are alive. This is set in 1958, a few months after the Losers defeat Pennywise the first time. Also referenced is Richie and Bev's lindy-hop from 11/22/63. If you are not familiar with that novel, Bev and Richie briefly appear, learning a dance to perform at a talent show.

Christmas Eve, 1958

Richie lounges on the couch in his living room, illuminated mostly by the white light of the Christmas tree, as his friends begin to gather their things to head home. "Sorry we didn't have a menorah for you, Stan the Man," Richie says, and then cackles at his own accidental rhyme – *menorah-for-ya*.

"That's okay," Stan says, rolling his eyes so subtly Richie's sure Stan thinks he didn't notice. "Hanukkah is over anyway. You'd know if you'd come over for it like I asked you."

"Well, I sure did want to, Stan," Richie says patiently. "But I told you, my great-aunt Edith was in town, so I was required to – what's the word? Socialize with my family?"

"You're an asshole, Rich," Stan says, and Richie got to his feet to bow mockingly.

Eddie peers out the big living room window. "Holy shit, it's really snowing."

"Don't worry," Richie says, "your mommy will be by any minute to pick you up."

"Beep beep, Richie," Eddie says. His voice says "beep beep" but his

tone says “fuck you.”

Richie flings his arms out. “Look, I invited you all over here and this is all the thanks I get? See if I ever do this again. Jesus.”

Beverly looks up at him from where she’s kneeling on the floor, looking through Richie’s parents’ records with Bill. “I’ve had a nice time, Richie, I don’t care about the rest of them.” She elbows Bill in the ribs as he flips to the next record. “Look, this is the one I learned to dance to!”

“Is it?” Bill says. “I’m n-not much of a d-d-dancer m-m-m- “

“Lucky you, though, Big Bill,” Richie says, swooping in to cut off Bill’s stutter. “You’re sitting next to the lindy-hop champion of Derry. But don’t think I mean you, Bevvie, I mean me. We both know I carried that relationship.” He extends a hand to Bill. “Haystack, take that record from Bev and put it on. It’s time for Bill to learn how to dance.”

Bill shakes his head, laughing. “My f-f-father will be coming to pick me in a minute.”

“Scared, Bill?” Richie shakes his head too, with a sigh. “Bev, why are we friends with these miscreants? Should the lady and I show the uncultured masses how to cut a rug?”

There is not a lot of space in the Toziers’ living room, especially with the seven kids currently crowded in, and the thick carpet is probably more conducive to rug burns than the lindy-hop. Still, Ben puts the record on and sits down next to Mike on the couch, rapt, as Richie and Beverly attempt an abbreviated version of the dance they’d learned down by the Barrens in the fall. All goes well until the part where Beverly is supposed to go through Richie’s legs, which ends up with Beverly skidding on the carpet and landing flat on her back, laughing her head off.

Mike applauds them and it feels sarcastic. Ben’s applause feels sincere. Richie helps Beverly to her feet, and they bow to their friends, both of them taking delight in their failed attempt.

A car horn blares outside. Richie peeks out the window and sees Mrs. Kaspbrak's car. The snow is too thick for him to see in the car window, but he imagines her laying on the horn, furious that Eddie hasn't appeared instantaneously just to please her. "Eddieeeee," Richie wails in a passable imitation of his mother's voice, which makes Eddie jump. "Don't keep her waiting."

Eddie tugs his hat on and zips his jacket, then pulls on his thick wool gloves.

"Give mommy a big kiss from me, Eds," Richie says pleasantly.

Eddie gives him the middle finger with both hands. "Merry Christmas to the rest of you. See you after break." He backs out the front door, keeping his middle fingers up until he disappears into the snow.

"And then there were six," Richie says with relish.

One by one, the rest leave. First Stan, then Bill, then Mike (who wishes Richie and his family a merry Christmas), and then Ben. Starry-eyed, he breathlessly tells Beverly "Merry Christmas," and hurries past Richie for the door, mumbling "thanks for having me, Rich," before disappearing into the blizzard and his parents' station wagon.

Nobody gets that starry-eyed for Richie, but Ben always does for Bev. He gets it, he supposes. Beverly is lovely, though the more Richie gets to know her the more he realizes how much he likes being just friends, even though his mother and father share knowing glances every time Richie mentions her name nowadays. It's because of the talent competition and the damn lindy-hop, but Richie can handle it. They'd had a blast, and so what if half the town thought they were on their way to becoming a couple? It's all bullshit, after all. They don't know how Ben looks at Bev or how Bev looks at Bill, or to whom Richie's eyes tend to drift when he doesn't catch himself.

He hides it rather well, he thinks.

Beverly is putting on her boots and reaching for her coat and hat. Richie frowns. "Is your mom or dad here?" He peeks out the window. No cars, just a dark, snow-covered street and snow still falling in fat,

heavy flakes.

Beverly shakes her head, wrapping her scarf around her neck. "I walked."

Richie blinks at her. "Can I ask a question?"

"You just did, but sure, Rich."

"Are you out of your goddamn mind?"

Beverly looks at him reproachfully. "My parents are both working late. I wanted to come. What was I supposed to do?"

Working late. Richie could believe it when it came to Beverly's mother, but Beverly's father....more likely he was working a normal shift and then he'd come home late, drunk, and if Bev was lucky she'd be asleep by the time he got home. "You can't walk home in this!" He flings an arm toward the window, gesturing wildly at all the snow. "You couldn't have said something? I bet somebody would have given you a ride."

Beverly rolls her eyes. "How was that going to go? 'Hi, Mrs. Kaspbrak, could you please drive me home? I don't have a ride, you see.' She hates me. She thinks I'm going to corrupt Eddie."

Richie gives her a withering look. "I'm offended. If any of us was going to corrupt Eddie I would have done it by now."

"She hates you too, for the same reason."

This was true. Richie never got dirtier looks than he did from Mrs. Kaspbrak when he walked into her house – sometimes unannounced, but only if nobody had answered the door. Face it, sometimes Eddie needed somebody to pull him out of that house. It was all for his own good.

Just like this is for Bev's own good. Richie leaps in front of her before she can reach the door to block her way. "Miz Marsh," he says in his best proper British impression, "a gentleman could never allow a lady to walk home alone in such frightful weather as this."

Beverly laughs, her eyes sparkling. “Lucky for me I don’t see any gentlemen here.”

Richie clutches at his chest, staggering around like he’s been mortally wounded. “How could you be so cruel when I love you so, Miss Scawlett?”

Beverly laughs again. She gives him this look, the one she gives him sometimes – fond, but almost patronizing, like she’s seen all the bad things the world’s capable of and Richie’s someone she still needs to protect from it all. Like Richie hasn’t seen it himself. “Beep beep, Richie.”

Richie throws himself back onto the couch. “Sit down, Bev. You can’t walk home in all that. You want another root beer?”

Bev shakes her head, uncertainly toying with her scarf as if she’s deciding whether to take it off. “No thanks.”

She’s still thinking of leaving. Richie sits up. “You know what Eddie would say right now?”

Beverly grins, anticipating what’s coming. “What?”

Richie delightedly puts on his best Eddie voice, fast-talking and manic. “Do you have any idea what weather like this can do to a person when it’s so cold? We’re talking about frostbite. Do you know what frostbite is? It’s when your nose turns black and it falls off, like those climbers on Mount Everest. Do you want to go through life without a nose? I didn’t think so! Your fingers, toes, and nose are all going to freeze. Oh, and let’s assume you even make it home, what happens next? Pneumonia. That’s right! Your lungs fill up with nasty shit and then you die.” He switches back to his regular voice. “How shitty would it be, though, if you did walk home and get sick? That’s even if you make it home. Maybe they’ll dig your body out of a snowbank tomorrow, all stiff and – “ Richie twists into an unsightly rigor mortis-esque position, tongue lolling out and eyes rolled back.

Bev wrinkles her nose, but doesn’t laugh. “Richie,” she says quietly. “My father doesn’t know I’m here.”

Richie straightens up and looks at her, all serious now. He sees a flash of something in Beverly's eyes, something he saw a lot over the summer but less and less often now. It might have been over, but in Derry, there was always something to be afraid of. Richie knows, too, a lot of what Bev doesn't talk about. He saw the bruises on her arms even when they were learning the lindy-hop, and he knows how much Beverly's father hated it that she danced with a boy at all, even though that boy was just Richie. "Well, fuck your father," Richie says unpleasantly. "I think it's dangerous for you to go out in this, and I don't think you should." He slaps the couch cushion next to him. "Come sit down."

Beverly comes and sits. Richie tugs the stocking cap off her head and flings it aside, hoping to indicate that she's not going anywhere if he has anything to do with it. If Richie had his way, Bev would never go back home, she'd stay away from her father for good, but nothing is that simple.

"If my parents get home, and I'm not there – " Beverly begins, and Richie puts a finger to her lips.

"Who cares?" Richie says. "I'd never let anything bad happen to you, Miz Scarlett."

Beverly grins that crooked grin of hers. "My hero. Won't we be the talk of the town?"

Richie flings an arm over her shoulders. "Haven't you heard we already are? That's cuz of our lindy-hop, thank you very much." Richie wasn't any damn hero, any of their friends would have done the same. The difference was that Bev hid so much from them, Ben and Bill were either too protected or too oblivious to know what Richie knew, Bev's father would have been even angrier to find her spending time with Mike or Stan, and Eddie, well, Eddie spending any alone time with Bev would get both of them in even worse trouble. So it was lucky they were at Richie's house. "See, at this point," Richie continues, keeping the levity up, "I'd feel pretty offended if you left. I'd think you don't like me or somethin' if you'd rather die in the snow."

"Hmm." Beverly pretends to mull over the situation. "I wouldn't want

that. You are my best friend, after all, Richie.”

Richie puts a hand to his chest again; this time he’s genuinely touched, but plays it up for the humor. “Am I? Aw, Bevvie, just what I always wanted!”

Beverly laughs, and Richie does too, and Richie’s parents come into the living room. Before they can even ask, before Beverly can get up and start insisting that she needs to go, Richie stands up. “Bev’s parents are at work and she walked here. She can’t walk home in that weather, she needs to sleep over.”

“Richie, tomorrow’s Christmas,” Beverly whispers. “I don’t want to burden you all, I can walk home, really.”

“Absolutely not, young lady,” Mrs. Tozier says firmly. “Not in that kind of snow. Where does your mother work?”

“She’s a waitress,” Bev says uncomfortably, and Mrs. Tozier immediately volunteers to telephone the restaurant where Mrs. Marsh works to explain the situation. She promptly walks into the kitchen when Beverly reluctantly gives the name of the restaurant, and dials the operator for the number.

From the living room, Richie and Bev can hear Mrs. Tozier’s end of the conversation. “Mrs. Marsh? I’m your daughter’s friend Richie’s mother. Yes, Richie Tozier. Well, I’ve got your daughter here in my living room and I simply can’t allow her to walk home in the weather like this. Frankly I’m uncomfortable allowing my husband to drive her either, God only knows the last time our tires were replaced. I don’t see another solution, Beverly must stay overnight. I’m sorry, Mrs. Marsh, I know it’s Christmas Eve – of course she’d be in our guest room, I wouldn’t have her and Richie in the same – “ A long pause. “I’ll tell you what, Mrs. Marsh, why don’t you and your husband come over for Christmas breakfast tomorrow morning? Then you can pick up Beverly and still celebrate your Christmas with her – that sounds great, Mrs. Marsh. Looking forward to it. We’ll see you in the morning.”

Mrs. Tozier returns to the living room, dusting off her palms. “All set. Beverly, you’ll stay with us overnight and your parents will join us

for breakfast in the morning.”

“Beverly,” Richie’s father adds, “we’d like you to know that you’re welcome here anytime. If either of your parents have a problem with that, you can tell them to give me a call or stop by for a chat.”

Richie feels a surge of pride that these are his parents, along with delight at the foreign idea of one of his friends – a *girl* – sleeping over at his house. On Christmas Eve, no less! “You better get right to sleep when you go to bed, Bevvie!” he says, nudging her with his shoulder. “Or else Santy Claus won’t come!”

Bev, a little shell-shocked, gets whisked off to the Toziers’ guest room, where Richie’s mother gives her an old nightgown of hers to wear for the night, along with a spare toothbrush.

Richie’s room and the guest bedroom are connected by a door, which greatly pleases Richie in this instance. He nudges his own bed from one wall to the other, the better to be close to Beverly. God, Haystack is just going to die of jealousy.

After lights out, Richie pushes the door open just a crack. “Bevvie,” he whispers, and hears her gasp.

“Jesus, Richie, I didn’t know that was you!”

“Who you expecting?” he scoffs. “Too early for Santy Claus.” He knows full well who she expects. Even months later, occasionally he still sees the clown’s face peering out at him from dark spaces.

“I don’t know,” Bev says, even though she does. He hears her move to sit down on the floor next to the door so they can talk. He pushes it open a little wider and can barely make out Bev’s broad grin, just a foot or two away from him.

“Fancy meeting you here,” Richie says.

“Unusual, to be sure.”

He’s quiet for a minute. “I’m glad you didn’t go home.”

“Me too. We don’t usually do much for Christmas. This is nice.”

“Bev, if there’s one thing I know,” Richie says, putting on a Southern gentleman’s voice, “it’s how to show a lady a good time.”

“Bull *shit*,” Beverly says, but has to stuff her fist in her mouth to stifle giggles.

“Are you going to get in trouble, do you think?” Richie asks.

“Yes. But it’ll be okay. My mom might be able to head off some of it since she said I could stay.”

“That’s good.” What Beverly really means is her mother will get the bruises rather than her. It’s still better that way, though he feels awful to think it. Richie goes quiet again, not his usual state, but he’s thinking. “Miz Scawlett, sometimes I do believe we ought to just run away together, you and I.”

“Sometimes I think the same thing, believe it or not.”

Richie likes the idea, though he knows it will never happen. He yawns widely. “Time to sleep, I think. Or else we’ll get nothing but coal in our stockings. G’night, Bev.”

“Richie.” Beverly catches his hand through the open door before he can close it. He pauses, and Bev’s big smile is back on her face. “Thanks. And merry Christmas.”

Richie smiles back. “Merry Christmas, Bev.”